

Message Text

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ACTION AF-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

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FM AMCONSUL LUANDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3098

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 1052

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT ELAB ETRN PINS AO

SUBJECT: THREATENED TRUCKERS' STRIKE AVERTED

1. SUMMARY. TRUCKERS CALLED OFF A THREATENED STRIKE ON NOVEMBER 30 AFTER THE GOVERNMENT MET MOST OF THEIR DEMANDS. CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC PRESSURE FROM THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE TRUCKERS NOT TO STRIKE PROBABLY CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR DECISION TO ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER AND NOT TO PRESS FOR ACCEPTANCE OF TWO DEMANDS THAT WERE POLITICAL IN NATURE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING LATE OCTOBER AND THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF NOVEMBER, THE IMMEDIATE SUBURBS OF LUANDA AND THE MAIN ROADS LEADING INTO THE CITY WERE SWEEPED WITH VIOLENCE. MANY TRUCKERS WERE ATTACKED, DRIVERS BEATEN AND, IN ONE CASE, BURNED TO DEATH. BLACK BANDITS, CLAIMING TO BE FROM ONE OF THE LIBERATION GROUPS BUT SUBSEQUENTLY REPUDIATED BY ALL GROUPS, SET UP ROADBLOCKS NEAR DONDO, SALAZAR AND CELA,
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STOPPING TRUCKS AND EXACTING PAYMENT OR RANSACKING THE GOODS

TRANSPORTED. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS NEWS REPORTERS THE ARMY GENERALLY DID NOTHING TO STOP THESE ATTACKS OR TO ESTABLISH PROTECTION FOR THE TRUCKS. TRUCKERS STAGED A WILD CAT STRIKE THAT BEGAN ON NOVEMBER 9 AND WAS FULLY EFFECTIVE BY NOVEMBER 12. SHORTAGES OF ALL KINDS OF FOOD WERE COMMON IN LUANDA BY NOVEMBER 11 AND THE JUNTA, ACTING THROUGH SECRETARY WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, ENG. FERNANDO FALCAO, WAS ABLE TO BRING A TEMPORARY HALT TO THE STRIKE ON NOVEMBER 13 WITH THE PROMISE OF INCREASED ROAD SECURITY. IN AGREEING TO RETURN TO WORK THE TRUCKERS PRESENTED A LIST OF 16 DEMANDS AND GAVE THE JUNTA UNTIL NOVEMBER 30 TO COMPLY. IF THE DEMANDS WERE UNMET BY THAT DATE THE TRUCKERS SAID THEY WOULD STRIKE AGAIN.

3. THE TRUCKERS' DEMANDS WERE FOR BETER SECURITY, IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS AND "JUSTICE." THE LATTER CATEGORY INCLUDED DEMANDS FOR THE REMOVAL OF TWO ARMY OFFICERS, FREEING OF OFFICERS SUPPOSEDLY IMPRISONED FOR TAKING ENERGETIC ACTION AGAINST BANDITS AND THE RETURN OF TRUCKERS EXPELLED FROM ANGOLA FOR POLITICAL REASONS. MANY DEMANDS WERE PETTY - CLOSING OF WEIGHING SCALES, AMNESTY FOR FINES FOR EXCESS WEIGHT, BUT MOST REPRESENTED REAL GRIEVANCES, PARTICULARLY AGAINST THE ARMY.

3. THE TASK OF REVIEWING THESE DEMANDS AND RESOLVING THE PROBLEM WAS GIVEN TO THE "WHITE HOPE" OF THE GOVERNMENT, FALCAO. AS A WHITE ANGOLAN POLITICIAN WHOSE POSITION IS BASICALLY TO DEFEND THE RIGHTS AND POSSESSIONS OF THE WHITE POPULATION IN ANGOLA, HE HAD THE SYMPATHY OF THE TRUCKERS. HE OBTAINED THE JUNTA'S APPROVAL TO ACCEDE TO MOST OF THE TRUCKERS' DEMANDS, WHICH INCLUDED THE EMBARRASSING STEP OF ISSUING A COMMUNIQUE REITERATING THAT THE HIGH COMMAND GUARANTEED TO INCREASE PATROLS ON THE ACCESS ROUTES TO LUANDA. THE TWO POINTS THAT THE JUNTA REFUSED TO CONCEDE WERE THE REMOVAL OF THE TWO OFFICERS AND THE RELEASE OF IMPRISONED OFFICERS.

4. IN THE DAYS BEFORE THE DEADLINE NUMEROUS STATEMENTS WERE PRINTED IN THE LOCAL PRESS FROM THE LIBERATION GROUPS, MEMBERS OF THE JUNTA AND ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS CALLING ON THE GOOD WILL, PATRIOTISM AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TRUCKERS TO AVOID A DEVASTATING STRIKE. THE TRUCKERS, WHO ARE ALL LOWER CLASS WORKING MEN, WERE APPARENTLY IMPRESSED BY THESE APPEALS WHICH HAD THEIR EFFECT IN CAUSING THE TRUCKERS NOT TO PUSH TOO FAR. ANOTHER FACTOR WAS THE THREAT BY THE MILITARY TO DEAL HARSHLY WITH ANY

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STRIKERS.

5. IN A MASS MEETING IN LUANDA ON NOVEMBER 30 THE TRUCKERS DISCUSSED THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER TO ACCEDE TO ALL BUT TWO DEMANDS. A DELEGATION WAS THEN CLOSETED WITH FALCAO, AND, IN THE BEST LABOR RELATIONS DRAMA, EMERGED LATE AT NIGHT, SMILING, TO ANNOUNCE AN AGREEMENT TO END THE STRIKE BASED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S OFFER.

6. COMMENT: THIS STRIKE WAS AN IMPORTANT TEST OF WILLS FOR THE TRUCKERS AND THE GOVERNMENT. FALCAO RECEIVED PRAISE FOR HIS ROLE AND PROVED THAT HE DOES HAVE INFLUENCE WITH WHITES, SOMETHING THAT A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS RECENTLY HAVE TOLD US HE LACKED. THE TRUCKERS HAVE DISCOVERED THEY HAVE A POTENT WEAPON AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO USE IT IN THE FUTURE SHOULD THE GOVERNMENT FAIL TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE SECURITY. THE POSSIBILITY ALSO EXISTS THEY COULD AGAIN TRY TO STRANGLE LUANDA AND OTHER CITIES FOR POLITICAL ENDS. THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE GIVING GROUND ON PERIPHERAL ISSUES, DID NOT PERMIT ITSELF TO BE PUSHED TOO FAR ON THE KEY POLITICAL DEMANDS. AS I REPORTED IN LUANDA 1022, ADMIRAL ROSA COUTINHO FEARED MASSIVE BLACK RIOTS OVER FOOD SHORTAGES AND A SUBSEQUENT WHITE BACKLASH IF THE TRUCKERS PULLED OFF A PROLONGED STRIKE. KILLORAN

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